

# LETTERS

## Combat Armor Badge Debate Lives On

Dear *ARMOR*,

Now that General Tait has weighed in on the Armor badge, I guess the 34th Editor of *ARMOR* Magazine can weigh in as well.

As the commander of an airmobile cavalry troop assigned to an air cavalry squadron of the First Aviation Brigade in Vietnam, I awarded the combat infantryman badge (CIB) or combat medical badge (CMB) to my enlisted soldiers who were all, to a man, either 11-series infantrymen (scouts, light weapons infantrymen, indirect and direct fire crewman), or combat medics either mounted in jeeps or three-quarter ton trucks mounted, or dismounted, or airmobile. However, I was not allowed to award their junior leaders CIBs, who were all Armor officers, even though they led those same infantry soldiers on patrols, combat actions, and conducted the dismounted infantry airmobile insertions and extractions. Adding insult to injury, Armor officer leaders of identical TOE organizations in air cavalry squadrons, assigned to airborne and airmobile divisions, were awarded the CIB by their division commanders.

My noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and soldiers, who clearly saw the injustice being done to their platoon leaders, conducted their own ceremonies at which they "awarded" their platoon leaders the CIB using the same criteria they themselves had met. Of course, the CIBs awarded by enlisted infantry soldiers never appeared in records jackets, but they were nevertheless highly prized by the young lieutenants who received them. But every enlisted man, NCO, and officer in my unit became acutely aware of how military bureaucrats could wreak injustice on deserving combat leaders.

The issue of the Combat Armor Badge (CAB) really grew contentious because so many Armor officers and officers of other branches were awarded the CIB in Vietnam for serving as advisors to the Vietnamese army (in practically any capacity), or were simply assigned as staff officers in U.S. infantry divisions. Infantry division commanders were authorized to award the CIB. Some were quite liberal in their interpretation of the rules while others were not. Granting the award was, consequently, quite arbitrary. Thus some received CIBs while never setting foot outside the division tactical operations center. Consequently, the CIB became the de facto "combat action badge." My best friend, a signal corps officer in the 9th Infantry Division, received his CIB while never venturing beyond the berm at Dong Tam. The result of the Vietnam CIB policy was to put into question the legitimacy of every Vietnam CIB awarded to an officer or senior NCO.

The issue of how to award a combat recognition badge gets more complicated as time goes on. Could General Marshall have foreseen today's 360-degree battlefield in which truck drivers and self-propelled artillerymen routinely conduct offensive light infantry missions like patrols and raids against irregular forces? Is

there any place in today's full-spectrum ground combat for General Marshall's thinking regarding these awards? The award of a badge for closing with and destroying the enemy can no longer be awarded to one class of persons of a particular favored branch or MOS, while discriminating against another class, but must be based on individual merit. No longer should infantrymen be awarded the CIB for simply "showing up" and snoozing in the back of a Bradley, while up the line, tankers, supply, and maintenance clerks, and others who engage in desperate offensive close combat are ignored. Would General Marshall, were he Chief of Staff today, have condoned granting a CIB to a male infantryman conducting a raid while denying it to a female military police also conducting a raid? Are raids not offensive close combat?

To look at it another way, let's substitute the word "white" for the word "infantryman" and substitute the word "black" for all other fighting soldiers. Let the regulations then state that only white soldiers are eligible for the CIB. Only in the Army is one still rewarded for what class they belong to and not for what they actually do. And, it is really out of step with the message that "An Army of One" is attempting to send. We are all soldiers and totally interdependent.

Does anyone seriously believe that the general officers who comprise our senior leadership will step up to the plate on this? Look at the 3- and 4-star armor leaders who have forgotten that "you dance with the one that 'brung' ya." General Gordon Sullivan, assistant commandant, Armor School, Army chief of staff, president of the Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA), CIB recipient; General Erik Shinseki, Army Chief of Staff; General Louis C. Wagner, 4-star commander of Army Materiel Command and commandant, U.S. Army Armor Center/School, CIB recipient; Lieutenant General Rick Brown, commandant, U.S. Army Armor Center/School, first chief of armor *who wore his branch insignia on his general officer uniform*, CIB recipient.

They were among the best our branch produced! But, if these guys, especially the former chiefs of staff are either not powerful enough, didn't care enough then, and don't care now, or have been co-opted by the system as they rose within it, then your best chance to get a Combat Armor Badge has passed, never to come again. Instead, use that energy to promote a combat action badge (or ribbon with branch accoutrement or color) for all those who actually deserve it, whatever their branch or MOS. However the normally farsighted Army usually seems, it is oddly myopic on this one.

I recommend that the CIB and CAB go the way of the Marine divisional patches. The Marines, no strangers to historical precedents, seem to do okay without them on their uniforms, but they are proudly displayed otherwise. If the CIB and CAB are needed so badly, let the associations award them as unofficial recognition badges to be worn at appropriate

occasions as are cavalry spurs, sabers, Stetson hats, and the Order of Saint George.

CHARLES R. STEINER  
LTC, U.S. Army, Retired

Dear *ARMOR*,

This is addressed to the author of the anonymous letter under, "More Badge Comments" in the January-February 2004 issue of *ARMOR*. First of all, if you do not have the guts to sign your name — do not write! Secondly, does the name Sullivan, 4 stars, ring a bell? Finally, give it a rest; stop beating on a dead horse.

What you are or what you are not cannot be measured by a badge. You are who you are. A badge does not change who you are. A bauble that anyone can buy and wear proves nothing!

JOSEPH C. KOPACZ  
COL, U.S. Army, Retired

## Conduct Maneuver Training at Maneuver Training Centers

Dear *ARMOR*,

In your January-February 2004 issue, Major Salas, "Musings of An Armor Officer," identified a disturbing trend at our combat training centers — too much emphasis on the planning process. When General Saint created the Combat Maneuver Training Center, it was just that, a maneuver training center. As different organizations have modified General Saint's vision, it seems all too often the close fight; the direct firefight is secondary. Yet, a training center is the only place where our Army can practice this essential combat skill.

I just spent 4½ years as a coach in the leader training program at Fort Irwin, and there is no doubt that maneuver training is significantly diluted by a lack of home-station resources, an operating tempo that does not allow units to properly train to exploit an National Training Center (NTC) rotation, and adding way too much extraneous stuff to the already overloaded NTC plate. To make matters worse, Major Salas is exactly right. Most crews and small units are destroyed so quickly by the opposing force's (OPFOR's) antitank snipers (BRDM, T-80, and BMP variety) that crews and units do not achieve anywhere near their training potential. Thanks to multiple repetitions as small units, the OPFOR has mastered the fundamental of tactical combat. They understand reconnaissance (not just their scouts but all units as they maneuver). They understand how to use the terrain to hide their movement. They are not shy about dismounting to peak over the hill. They almost always set a base of fire. They strive to engage the enemy from at least two directions, preferably three, if OPFOR attack aviation is involved. They use artillery to set desirable conditions for the direct firefight. Their leaders at all levels are ruthless in enforcing gunnery preparation and standards. And, most importantly, they get

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to practice constantly. They will never be employed in combat as units.

I recall during a training battle, driving up to an OPFOR battalion commander (a captain) who had just deviated from the brigade plan and defeated a counterattacking mech-heavy task force. It was a great move, and I conducted a mini after-action review with this infantry captain. He said he probably would not have deviated from the plan, albeit within commander's intent, nor done so well his first six rotations! This OPFOR captain had more opportunity to maneuver heavy forces in training in 2 months than most CONUS company commanders get in 18 months.

If the leaders of a training center have a propensity to focus on planning as the root cause of defeats, the challenge is further compounded.

It is no accident that 3d Infantry Division (a legacy division when they executed Operation Iraqi Freedom) has consistently had one of the best home-station training programs in CONUS, with exceptional emphasis on multiple integrated laser engagement simulator (MILES) gunnery, reconnaissance, and maneuver.

I am realistic enough to know the Army as an institution will never formally embrace an abbreviated planning process such as the one Major Salas suggests. I only hope your readers are not so distracted by his comments on planning that they lose sight of his real message: Let's do more maneuver training at maneuver training centers. It is the only place we can do this sort of training. When I commanded a tank battalion in Germany, we were fortunate to do four Combat Maneuver Training Center rotations (two OPFOR and two BLUEFOR). The first two were relatively unsuccessful — we simply were not trained. During the last two, we had a chance to conduct training at Hohenfels at least a week prior to the rotation. What a huge difference that made.

PHILIP ALLUM  
U.S. Army, Retired

### Organic Combined Arms — A Better Way to Reorganize

Dear *ARMOR*,

Reorganizing the heavy division to include more maneuver brigades is a worthwhile experiment (although we might be so bold as to call them regiments). However, I am dismayed at one of the courses of action under consideration: dismembering the cavalry squadron. The divisional cavalry squadron is the lowest echelon at which true combined arms exist. The value of organic and habitual relationships between tanks, Bradleys, and helicopters cannot be overestimated. Recently, the Army placed increasing emphasis on intelligence, which is useful at the company commander's level. Pulling the OH-58 Kiowa Warriors back to divisional control represents a step in the opposite direction. The synergy, which allows a pilot to rapidly direct powerful ground forces onto fleeting targets, will be replaced by yet another frustrated observer trying to push information

through the chain of command as an opportunity vanishes. However units are reorganized, the emphasis should always be toward organic combined arms rather than temporary task organizations.

JOSEPH E. BERG  
CPT, U.S. Army

### "Hill 755" — A Different Story

Dear *ARMOR*,

I read Rod Frazer's article, "Hill 755 — 15 Days to the End of the Korean War" in your November-December 2003 issue. I understand that the story was taken from an article which originated in a newspaper in Montgomery, Alabama, and was verified with the author of the article, Rod Frazer. There are, however, several glaring errors in the article.

I would like to quote some of Rod Frazer's comments and then give you the corrections:

"While on Hill 755, I visited each tank and met the tank commanders (TC) and crews of our five M46s. I was the TC on one tank, as well as the platoon leader, and had the responsibility for everyone." Rod Frazer was not a platoon leader in C Company, 140th Tank Battalion, 40th Infantry Division in July of 1953, specifically during the action on Hill 755 as described in his article. The following were the four platoon leaders: 1st Platoon, Richard D. Rosenfeld; 2d Platoon, Arthur H. Dilleuth; 3d Platoon, James S. Duncan; and 4th Platoon, Richard L. Murnighan. There were no tanks from C Company assigned to Lieutenant Frazer, nor did he borrow any tanks from any of the platoon leaders in C Company. My platoon was on Hill 755 and we had only three tanks, not five, as quoted in Mr. Frazer's article. The other two tanks in my platoon were under the command of Sergeant Woody Koontz and were positioned on another hill a mile away. There were no other tanks on Hill 755.

"My first tank on 755 had a good crew; ... Corporal John Henry Shelly was the gunner ... Corporal Charlie E. Hux was the bow gunner; Kowalcheck (called Pollock by the men) was the driver..." These men were part of my crew on my tank, number 66, and "Kowalcheck" (his name was Kowalczyk) was not even in my platoon. As a matter of fact, he wasn't even in C Company. At the time, he was a member of B Company. "The Pollock" was the loader not the driver and his name was Swierczwski.

"The disabled tank blocked the narrow trail. I ran to it ... Hearing noise underneath the vehicle, I crawled there to find the body of the gunner ... and the badly wounded driver ... Still under the tank, I took off Kowalcheck's belt and made a tourniquet for his leg ... He was crying, but my attention calmed him." At the time these men were hit, I was with them outside the tank. It was I who pulled them under the tank. Later Private Robert J. Vreeke (a jeep driver who was assigned to LT Frazer) and a Korean medic came to the tank and evacuated Swierczwski, who was still alive. LT Frazer was not there.

"Communications were a constant source of frustration; our radios never worked." I don't know which radios LT Frazer was trying to use, but the ones on the tanks in my platoon were operating quite well. I talked daily to the CP, my other tanks, and the light section.

These corrections reflect the combined remembrances of the four platoon leaders mentioned, who believe the record should be set straight.

ARTHUR H. DILLEMUTH

### Yes, TF 1-63 Armor Was the First Unit to Air Insert M1A1s

Dear *ARMOR*,

Captain Edward Cox commented in the January-February 2004 issue of *ARMOR* that 1st Battalion, 35th Armor (1-35) was the first to air-insert M1A1s in support of combat operations, not Task Force (TF) 1st Battalion, 63d Armor (1-63). While TF 1-35's contribution as part of Task Force Hawk is well documented, that unit's movement was into a secured allied country. A ground movement and subsequent combat operations in Kosovo followed their air movement. On the other hand, TF 1-63 was the first U.S. unit to air-insert armored systems directly into combat, in this case into the Basrah airfield in Northern Iraq. The only other time an armor unit was air-inserted directly into combat was by the British, using gliders during World War II.

PATRICK T. WARREN  
LTC, U.S. Army

### No, the Honor Belongs to 1-64 Armor

Dear *ARMOR*,

I read Major Maddox's article, "Checkmate on the Northern Front," in the September-October 2003 issue of *ARMOR*, claiming TF 1-63 Armor was first to air land M1A1s in support of combat operations. This occurred last year in Northern Iraq. I also read the letter in response by Captain Cox in the January-February 2004 issue of *ARMOR*, claiming the same feat with 1-35 Armor, as part of TF Hawk flying into Tirana, Albania, then Skopje, Macedonia, in 1999, I believe. I disagree. The rightful owner of this honor, if it can be called such, is TF 1-64 Armor.

The Desert Rogues flew the Immediate Ready Company and the Division Ready Force (Fly Away), and no less than 10 M1A1 tanks, from Fort Stewart, Georgia, to land in Mogadishu Somalia, to conduct combat operations during Operation Continue Hope II. Our tanks began landing at the Mogadishu airport just days after the famous battle of 3 and 4 October 1993. That battle, and its lack of armor, was the reason we went. The first time the M1A1 tanks engaged in combat was Operation Desert Storm and I don't believe any flew into theater. The next time was in Somalia, the Marines first, but they did not fly in, TF 1-64 Armor did.

PAUL D. TERRELL  
MAJ, U.S. Army